RESTORATION REVIEW

Leroy Garrett, Editor

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REALITY BEHIND REALITY

Our eyes are fixed, not on the things that are seen, but on the things that are unseen: for what is seen passes away; what is unseen is eternal.

2 Cor. 4:18

(Photo-collage by Talmage Minter)

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The Church of Christ: Yesterday and Today . . .

THE CHURCH AS A SENSITIVE COMMUNITY

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.—Mt. 5:5

In turning through a portfolio of pictures of Pablo Picasso, I was impressed by one that showed his face twisted in agony as he looked upon some untoward situation. The photographer explained that it was a candid shot, taken when the artist suddenly came upon a scene of human suffering. The picture revealed the soul of an artist, one who struggles to capture his innermost feelings upon a piece of rude canvass. Robert Frost says something about "unless the heart of a poet breaks . . ."

The soul of the church should be something like that. In looking upon Picasso's anguished face or in reading Frost's troubled poetry, one has to say, *He cares.* The world must see this as it looks into the face of the church or as it hears its message, or better still as it sees those actions that speak louder than words. If the church is not a sensitive community, it can hardly bear Christ's likeness. Isaiah saw the Messiah not only as a suffering servant, but as "a man of sorrows," one ready to be "pierced for our transgressions, tortured for our iniquities. "

If any picture of Jesus in scripture is clear, it is that he is one who cares and cares deeply. It was something that went far beyond sympathy, and even empathy does not seem to describe it. It was apparent to all troubled souls that Jesus cared, and so they found their way to mm. Be always had both time and heart. No one bored him and no problem was too slight. Children, women, the poor, prostitutes, and even the lowly publicans and lepers found grace and acceptance in his presence. He was sensitive to poverty, disease, injustice, loneliness. Isaiah saw him as having been "assigned a grave with the wicked, a burial-place among the refuse of mankind," which was consistent with his life in that he ministered as quickly to society's outcasts as to anyone else.

Most people of his day threw stones at lepers if they came too close, but Jesus both welcomed them into his presence and ministered to their needs. While most Jews were careful both to thank God that they were not a woman and to make sure that they did not so much as speak to one in public, Jesus not only initiated conversations with these non-persons but accepted them as his companions. Even his disciples could not find time for a noisy gang of kids and were content to shew them away, while Jesus not only found time but saw in them the likeness of the kingdom that he had come to reveal. And who was more despised than the publicans, those tax-gatherers that dared to fellowship official Rome? Jesus not only entered into their homes and dined with them, but was able to see the Spirit of God in them as much, if not more, than in those who rejected them.

The story of Jesus is one of a sensitive world, even if it was a *religious* world. Religion is often not only insensitive but even cruel and calloused. It was "righteous" men who dragged a girl from her companion into the presence of Jesus, charging her with sin. It was of course the proper thing to do, for she was guilty of adultery, and was by all means beneath them. But Jesus was more impressed with *their* sins than with hers. His invitation was an unlikely one for a rabbi or preacher: "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." Some-how they picked up his radar and realized that he knew of their sins even more than they knew of those of the girl they accused, and so they excused themselves, one by one, and interestingly enough, from the eldest to the youngest.

What was there about him that was so different? His sensitivity. Not that he was self-concerned, but that he took people seriously. That poor girl must have seen it, once again alone with a man, a young, handsome man, but one so unlike any that she had ever met before. His interest in her was differ-ent from what she had been used to. He wanted her without wanting her body. It may well have been with a touch of humor that he asked her what had happened to her accusers (as if he didn't know!), for he went on to say what might be paraphrased as: "We can't have court without as many as two or three witnesses, so I suppose I'll have to, dismiss this case!" My, my what a *liberal* he was! And what thoughts she must have had when she heard him say, "Neither will I serve as a witness against you. Go and sin no more"!

What she saw in Jesus is what the world must see in us. The compassion evident in his face and demeanor must have been something else. We are to thank God for the picture that comes across in scripture, however limited it may be. Thank God for Mt. 9:36: "When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd, harassed and helpless." And thank God for the story of Jesus and the widow of Nain, who appears in scripture bearing her son to his burial. "When the Lord saw her his heart went out to her." (Lk. 7:13), an incident that says so much about Jesus. He was out there in the world of heartache and grief, and he was sensitive to what he saw.

And there's that beautiful passage that is known mostly for its brevity, *Jesus wept.* The presence of death and anguish touched his heart. He had the power to act positively amidst the human predicament, but not before he wept. Maybe it is this that the world needs to see in the church. Action to be sure, but let it not be without tears. We call Jeremiah the weeping prophet, and not without reason, for he felt deeply for God's people: "My eyes must stream with tears, for the Lord's flock is carried away into captivity" (13:17). We may well need weeping prophets and for the same reason. We can somehow take all too lightly both the secularism and the party ism in the church. Another prophet addressed himself to that: "You who loll on beds inlaid with ivory and sprawl over your couches, feasting on lambs from the flock, and fatted calves, who pluck the strings of the lute and invent musical instruments like David, you who drink wine by the bowlful and lard

yourselves with the richest of oils, *but are not grieved at the ruin of Joseph"* (Amos 6:4-6).

The prophet names our sin: amidst our comforts we are not grieved in the face of ruin.

Perhaps we have lost our sense of awe in the presence of God and nature. If Plato could say that philosophy begins in wonder, it is not amiss to suggest that religion begins with concern. Three books should inspire us: the book of nature, the book of human nature, and the book of God. And these in turn should motivate us not only to know more and more but to serve in building a better world. We must be more sensitive to the implications of corporate worship. It *is* a bad sign when we sing hymns with but little thought of the words and break bread as a matter of common-place, not to mention allowing our minds to wander as we pray to the Father. Sermons are often spoken with a hands-in-vest manner and listened to only halfheartedly. We have lost the sense of urgency in both worship and ministry. Truth must be vital to us, especially in reference to easing human misery.

Concerned believers reach out to the world around them with warm hearts. They may not be *of* the world, but they are *in* it, and they are to love it as God loved it and gave His son for it. They may not necessarily be political animals, but they are sympathetic to the political processes, realizing that the powers that be are ordained of God. They will be as quick to pray for a President in trouble as to loll in the frivolity of destructive criticism. They will be out in the world where the action is—its schools, homes, businesses, institutions—and will not withdraw into a parochial world that is safe and untainted. They will feel human suffering at the gut level and put forth a warm sound. *Light* and *salt* are figures that Jesus used, but light is to be turned on in dark places and salt preserves and saves only when applied.

We have our outcast society as much as Jesus did. Many of our aged ones are well nigh forgotten, turned over as they are to the government and homes for senior citizens, largely ignored by kin and the church alike. It is to our shame that the government is looked to for succor more than are the saints of God, and who can expect any real feeling in what the government does? Oppression, loneliness, rejection, poverty do not take the same dress in every age, but they are always with us. Even boredom can be terribly burdensome and we all have it in us to be part of the answer to that problem.

In that beatitude Jesus tells us what he wants the church to be: *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. This is so different* from worldly philosophy, which tells us to forget our troubles and not to be bothered with other people's. To that worldly standard Jesus says, expressing the idea in other terms: "Woe to you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep." The believer's stance before the world is not to be giddy and jovial, but rather that quiet joy that is sensitive to the crucial issues of human existence.

We are to be mourners, not in a physical sense, but in terms of being gravely and deeply concerned for man's predicament.

This means we must be more sensitive of the gravity of sin, our own as well as the world's. Our sense of sin may well be defective, which causes a shallow idea of joy. We are to mourn in the face of our own helplessness and sinfulness, realizing that there is no hope if we are left to ourselves. And we sorrow for a world that knows not God and honors not His son.

As a sensitive community we are sorrowful but not morose, serious but not solemn, sober but not sullen. And so our joy is that in Jesus we find our sufficiency. Though "a man of sorrows" Jesus endured the cross "for the joy that was set before him." He is our comfort, which he promises us, but comfort has meaning only to a community that is acquainted with the raw edges of life and mourns for a world yet unredeemed.—*the Editor*

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THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION - OR WHAT?

"Even though I was totally unprepared for the effect it had on me, I saw it with my own eyes," is the way a gripping narrative begins in *The Discerner,* a bulletin issued by the Central Church of Christ in Pampa, Texas. Leon Odom, a preacher I have known since he was a boy growing up in Dallas, is the writer, and it is apparent that he is giving an account of a ghastly experience that may well involve ghosts and ghouls as well as mere mortals.

"I got out of the automobile and stood before the sign which read *Church of Christ.* As I looked through the doors of this neat little country town church building, I saw it," he adds, inciting the reader with anticipatory anxiety.

"As I stood there looking at that sight, it was like looking into the open casket of a loved one. I stood gazing in amazement; stunned, and I confess, broken-hearted, as I literally fought back the tears," says Leon, assuring us now that he must have seen something like a Nazi concentration camp or perhaps a vision of hell itself.

Such a woeful description caused me to think back over the things I have seen in our church buildings—or heard about from reliable sources—that would call for such a reaction. An elder and a preacher once had a fist-fight in one of our East Texas churches, and then there is the story of carnality between a minister and one of the sisters in one of the restrooms, in case one happened to be peering through *that* window. Then there are the tales of assassination, *character* assassination that is, which have been rather common among us, even emanating from our pulpits and with the blessings of the leadership. These sometimes take the form of "withdrawal of fellowship," often from the most spiritual and most responsible of the congregation. And I have heard some debates that might merit

such a description as comes from Leon Odom's pen. Many a church wrangle might also qualify.

Then I thought of what history has to say about ghastly deeds within church edifices. Both Syrian and Roman soldiers killed priests within the confines of the temple, some of the priests falling to pagan arrows as they stood guarding the entrance to the holy place unarmed. But one Syrian general did not fair so well on his visit to the temple at Nanaea in Persia. Lured there by an extravagant display of gold, the priests locked the doors on him and his soldiers, and then stoned them to death from secret openings in the roof. They then dismembered them, cutting off their heads and hurling them, like footballs, to those outside. That should really raise the hair and enlarge the pupils of a peeping Leon Odom!

There is Jesus' reference to Zechariah "who you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar" (Mt. 23:35), and how many martyrs have there been, like Thomas Becket, who died inside cathedrals and in the shadow of holy things? But the most gruesome story of all is that of the Syrians, led by the beastly Antiochus Epiphanes, who once destroyed 80,000 Jews in three days, including women and children, in the streets of Jerusalem, who did every abominable thing imaginable to desecrate the temple. They offered swine's flesh at the altar and forced the Jews to eat the entrails of the sacrifices. They used the sacred vessels for their feasts of debauchery, in which they wallowed in the floor in every imaginable indecency. The soldiers had intercourse with the prostitutes of the city in what was considered the holiest place in the world. This would surely have left Leon or any of the rest of us speechless had we witnessed such a spectacle. It is understandable that it was just such as this that Daniel was describing as "the abomination of desolation."

It was hardly anything like this, however, that found brother Odom fighting back the tears as he peered into one of our buildings. It wasn't even a seance or any kind of fellowship with departed spirits. Nor a dance of ghouls. Not even a crap game between the elders and the preacher. Nor a bingo or a pajama party.

In somber tones he tells us: "It was sitting at the front of the auditorium next to the pulpit—a new piano."

The scene is Mobeetie, Texas and it concerns a Church of Christ that I told about in our last issue under the title "Visiting Among Free Churches of Christ." Lester Hathaway is the preacher there, a man known far and wide for his faithfulness to the gospel. As Leon says in his article: "This was not a so-called 'conservative wing' of the Christian Church . . . But this was where the body of Christ meets, in Mobeetie, Texas, twenty miles from Pampa." And it now has a piano! Lester sent me this copy of *The Discerner* with Leon's article. The party who mailed it to Lester boldly inscribed in red across the page the questions "Lester, is this true? When did you do it? Why???"

This “Say it ain’t so, John” attitude shows how disproportionate our view of instrumental music has become. One would suppose that Lester Hathaway has committed the unpardonable sin, or at least something akin to such sins that incensed the mind of Paul, like lasciviousness, witchcraft, or sodomy. Would the reaction have been less violent had Lester only gotten drunk or divorced his wife? Leon even tells us of the reaction of the piano dealer in Pampa: “The piano was purchased recently in Pampa and the man who sold it was heard to say, ‘I did something today I never thought I would do. I sold the church of Christ a piano!’”

Leon concludes his piece by assuring us that the church will go farther and farther into apostasy so long as “they continue to ignore the New Testament.” Such judgment indicates that the “deplorable scene in Mobeetie” is an outrageous disregard for what the scriptures say. But don’t we all acknowledge that the New Testament is *silent* about the instrument? It is not silent about hate, malice, jealousy, railing, faction—sins committed in many of our buildings—which may justly be called *deplorable* and they might well cause us to weep. But the scriptures nowhere say that instrumental music is a sin. If it were so inherently wicked as to cause a good man like Leon Odom to weep as if he were looking into the open casket of a loved one, it is unlikely that God would ever have said, Old Testament or New, the likes of: “Praise him with stringed instruments and organs” (Ps. 150:4).

Since the New Covenant scriptures are silent on the subject, we have to leave it to each brother to interpret that silence according to his own conscience. Whatever conclusion one reaches can be no more than his own deduction and cannot therefore be made a test for others. We must be good Campbellites and follow the advice in the *Declaration and Address* to the effect that nothing can be made a test of fellowship but what is clearly and distinctly set forth in the word of God.

I lay claim to my right to be non-instrumental on this question. My reasons go beyond the silence of the scriptures to involve simplicity of worship and the principle of unity, but still it is only my own interpretation and cannot be imposed upon others. I sometimes remind Christian Churches that this will be their problem as the churches of the world become more united. What will they say about the organ, not simple to us, but to the great Greek Orthodox Church, the Scot Presbyterians, the Quakers, and others who for conscience sake cannot use the instrument? I won’t have that problem. And of course you haven’t heard arguments against the’ instrument until a Scot Presbyterian gets after you!

I would urge Leon Odom and other of my brothers to save their tears for the sins that matter most. It would be a sad day if the presence of an organ meant that those who use it would reject us as brothers unless we went along with the idea. But no one does that. Leon would be as welcome as ever at Mobeetie, whether he sings or not, and knowing those folk as I do, they’d probably allow him to speak to them. So the world hasn’t exactly come to

an end in Mobeetie. They still love Jesus and they still honor the scriptures as authoritative, even if they no longer interpret their silence the same way Leon and I do.

It would be well for us non-instrumentalists to visit instrumental congregations with more frequency. And let us study the piano or organ, taking a good long look at it. Then we should ask ourselves if we have not allowed it to become some kind of gargantuan symbol of apostasy far beyond what it really is. Perhaps some instrumentalists have a similar attitude in reverse, the instrument standing in their minds like a bulwark of freedom, a testimony of their liberty in Christ. One feminine enthusiast back in the early days of the controversy insisted that if they removed the piano from the building she would be straddle it.

Now that would have been a sight to have wept over.—*the Editor*

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IS THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF HIRING A MAN TO BE THE MINISTER OF A CONGREGATION HAVING ELDERS IN HARMONY WITH THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES?

By Leroy Garrett

The assignment of this question affords me the opportunity of taking a fresh look at a subject that has been prominent in my thinking for 35 years.

I was immersed into Christ by W. L. Oliphant at the old Oak Cliff Church of Christ in Dallas when I was 16 years old. It was three years later that I resolved to be a preacher. Encouraged by brother Oliphant to attend Freed-Hardeman College in Tennessee, I left Texas for the first time on the Texas and Pacific, which was my first train ride.

The next summer, after my first session, at the college, Jack Hawkins, a roommate of mine, and I worked with an evangelist in Louisiana, Elmer Goble, an obscure and simple preacher, a man somewhat older than ourselves, who was content to proclaim the gospel under tents and brush arbors, on front porches and courthouse squares, and even in church buildings, if anyone would let him. This was different from what I had seen in preachers employed by congregations to preach to those who were already saved. I was profoundly impressed by Elmer Goble, not only because of his passion for the souls of men, but also for his love and goodness, and for his knowledge of the scriptures. It was evident that he too could have been serving as a resident minister with a comfortable salary, but he chose to break new ground for Jesus' sake.

It was from Elmer Goble that I first heard about the pastor system, and I had no difficulty seeing the difference between what he was doing as an evangenst and what I had come to understand to be the work of an evangelist from other preachers. He had a way of inviting the located ministers to join him in the mission field, insisting that he could put 50 preachers to work. It impressed me that he got such little help and that he had to work with such limited resources.

While I was with him that summer he had a debate with a Baptist preacher named Cobb, which left me wondering how anybody could ever be a Baptist, but I left there equally convinced that no one should be a located minister. It was a lasting and fatal influence in my life.

One passage that brother Goble taught me was Ro. 15:19-20: “So that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation.” I hadn’t the slightest notion where Illyricum was and I barely knew that Jerusalem was outside Texas, but I understood that Paul’s aim was to preach to the lost and plant new churches, like brother Goble was doing, and that was good enough for me. So, when my time came to address the Preachers’ Club at Freed-Hardeman, I spoke on “Paul’s Aim,” zeroing in on Ro. 15:20, which proved to be my first installment of a long and turbulent “lover’s quarrel” with the Church of Christ. W. Claude Hall was the club’s sponsor, and it was he who commented, often at length, on our sermons. But he made short shrift of mine: “Leroy is wrong. Never mind why he’s wrong, but he’s wrong,” which ‘proved to be prophetic of what I was to hear from my brethren for the rest of my life: “Leroy Garrett is wrong. Never mind why he’s wrong, but he’s wrong.” And coming from infallible interpreters, how can such a judgment be questioned?

But I was not that easily satisfied. Inheriting a measure of my father’s stubbornness, who actually broke his fist hitting a mule in the nose in a struggle for supremacy, I wanted to know *why* I was wrong. I forthwith took it up with my fellow students, one by one, for the rest of the year, vindicating my position on Ro. 15:20. They gave it back to me in like kind. They called me “gospel hitchhiker” because I hitchhiked all over Tennessee and Mississippi speaking to country churches and because it happened to have been the topic of another of my talks to the Preacher’s Club. Once I’d return from these excursions they’d taunt me by asking, “Have you been out again building on another man’s foundation?”

Even the visiting preachers did not escape my questioning. When C. L. Wilkerson came to the campus for a meeting, I talked with him about it, but all I could get out of him was, “Our preachers don’t do it that way.” But it was generally conceded that I was sincere, however badly misled, and so I faired rather well. My day came when brother Hardeman asked me to take his place during his absence from the pulpit of the college church, which I did with great effect, giving them one of the very best of McGarvey’s

sermons and with no reference to the pastor system. And I redeemed myself with Claude Hall, who was also my English teacher, by calling the king of Judah "Jehahshaphat" instead of Jehoshaphat. I was also given a leading part in the senior play, the role of the villain, opposite James Baird, the hero, who is now president of Oklahoma Christian College. I was so fierce and mean that I excited brother Hardeman's grandchildren to his delight. As to whether this was ominously prophetic of things to come I'll leave for you to decide.

The Preacher's Club also presented a skit about that time, in which we anticipated the day when we would all be old men, looking back upon a lifetime of service for the Lord. As we stood there with canes in hand and our hair grayed with flour, singing "In a land where we'll never grow old," the girls in the audience, whom we were supposed to marry, blotted their eyes with their hankies. The longer we sang the more they wept, which was all the reward we could ask for, whether in this world or the world to come.

The class that year was something else. Not only did we have a future college president, but one who is presently a professor at Harding Graduate School of Religion and another at Harding College, along with several who are now ministers in our churches, as well as a few successful business men and a coterie of preacher's wives. This illustrious class of 1940 had a special 25th anniversary reunion a few years back, with everyone invited but the class villain. They may have figured that he'd have made another one of his talks on Ro. 15:20! But it was an inexcusable omission, for no one in that class or any other has been as signally honored by Freed-Hardeman College as I!

In the years that followed I was to learn that I was not as alone on the minister question as I supposed. G. A. Dunn, Sr., an old warhorse of many a battle, was known among Churches of Christ to oppose the system, and he greatly encouraged me in the years of work we did together. I also began a correspondence with Gilbert O. Nations, who had impressive academic credentials, with both a Ph.D. and a J.D., being a professor of law as well as a judge, and an authority on the Roman Catholic system. In a visit with him on one occasion he confided in me that if he had his life to live over he would spend it opposing the salaried clergy, convinced as he was that the system is the root of many evils. He also helped me in learning the distinction between preaching the gospel and teaching the apostles' doctrine, a distinction considered vital to the pioneers of our Movement, which I was eventually to learn.

Judge Nations wrote as follows, long before most of us came on the scene: "If one should go before a Bible class and discuss the assigned lesson, it would be said that he is teaching. But the same words spoken from a pulpit would be reported as preaching. In neither case would the speaker be preaching in the scriptural sense. He would be either teaching or exhorting or both. The place where words are spoken does not make the

distinction between preaching and teaching. It would be difficult really *to preach* to a congregation of Christians."

The judge went on to say that no one in the scriptures preached sermons, but rather the gospel, and always to the lost and never to the church, and then adds: "To keep a man hired to preach for years and years to a congregation of saved Christians is both unauthorized and absurd. The man in the pulpit is not preaching at all . . . The apostles and evangelists did not preach to congregations, and no New Testament church had its preacher."

Much of my encouragement came from the eminent scholars of the Christian world and from our pioneer preachers. It was reassuring to read from William Barclay of Glasgow that *kerussein* (preach) means the proclamation of the Christian message as a series of facts, while *didaskein* (teach) means "not the proclamation of the Christian facts, but the exposition of their meaning and of their significance." He goes on to observe that preaching is for those who have not heard the gospel before, while teaching is for those who have already entered the Christian fellowship, except in those instances where it may be necessary to "remind" the believers of the facts that they have already accepted. And from J. Y. Campbell, professor of New Testament at Westminster College in Cambridge, England, came this word: "*Preaching* is proclamation, and in the NT usage nearly always the proclamation of the gospel, to those who have not yet heard it, or not yet accepted it. *Teaching* is instruction, in the NT usually instruction in the consequences, ethical or theological, of acceptance of the gospel. So teaching is usually addressed to those who have heard and believed the gospel. Most of the sermons of Christian preachers today are therefore 'teaching' rather than preaching."

From our own pioneer scholars came this confirmation from J. W. McGarvey: "Preaching and teaching are here distinguished as they are throughout the book of Acts, the former being addressed to unbelievers and the latter to believers. That he did both shows that both believers and unbelievers were drawn to his lodging." *(Commentary on Acts,* p. 288)

Then from Alexander Campbell: "Preaching the gospel and teaching the converts are as distinct and distinguishable as enlisting an army and training it, or as creating a school and teaching it. Unhappily for the church and the world, this distinction, if at all conceded as legitimate, is obliterated or annulled in almost all protestant Christendom." He goes on to insist that this "is no mere speculative distinction. It was appreciated, fully understood and acted upon, or carried out, in the apostolic ministry" *(Popular Lectures and Addresses,* p. 536).

One of our pioneer physicians, Dr. Carroll Kendrick, wrote as follows in the *Gospel Advocate* back in 1890, part of which explains the meaning of Acts 20:7, which indicates, according to the King James Version, that Paul "preached" to the church at Troas.

> The ancient disciples met "to break bread," etc. What we now call preaching was no part of their purpose or practice in the observance of the Lord's day. They never met to be preached to, and they never were preached to in our modern sense—not even once. In Acts 20:7-9, where the common version says: "Paul preached to them," the revision rightly says: "Paul discoursed with them." Luke does not use the word for preach. His speech was social discourse, conversational. There is absolutely neither precept nor precedent for preaching to the church. Preaching the gospel is for the world. Teaching is for the church, and is to be done by a plurality of bishops in each congregation. Those of us who would be consistent should change our practice, or our motto and banner. (p. 373)

One response that we received from all this: "Get up here and preach five minutes and teach five minutes, show us the difference and tell us when you change gears."

Along the way I learned that the minister system is a comparatively recent development in our Movement, one borrowed from our religious neighbors and promoted by Bible schools and Christian colleges. Out' pioneers sought to return the Bible to the people in an intelligible translation, free of creedalism and clerical deductions, and to restore a mutual ministry in the assemblies of the saints. Campbell once reported on the several churches in his part of Virginia, pleased that there was not an employed minister in any pulpit, but that with their seniors the saints could edify themselves and share in sending out an evangelist.

The pastor system was so rare among us even as late as 1885 when Isaac Errett in the *Christian Standard* suggested its adoption on an emergency basis due to the paltry condition of the churches following the Civil War, that both David Lipscomb and James Harding rejected the idea as an innovation that would serve only as "a fungus growth upon the church, dwarfing its growth and preventing the development of its members." *(Gospel Advocate*, May 20, 1885)

It also reassured me to learn that we have scores, if not hundreds, of churches in this country and abroad that have performed their ministry for generations on a mutual basis, apart from any hired functionary. In 1952 I met Carl Ketcherside and Hershell Ottwell, who, along with others, introduced me to numerous congregations of this type, including this one at Hartford, that I hardly knew existed. This congregation at Hartford flourishes as an example of how the Body of Christ can under its elders realize the objective Paul points to in Eph. 4:16: "Bonded and knit together by every constituent joint, the whole frame grows through the due activity of each part, and builds itself up in love."

I was heartened to read John Straiton's report on the ministry of our British churches. In a lecture at Abilene he first tells of how they call their buildings such names as "Hope Chapel" or "West Street Hall" instead of "Church of Christ," and of how no announcement makes mention of "the minister" since they recognize no such office. Emphasis is given to the reading of the Word, both Old and New Covenant scriptures, with the New Covenant scriptures read through every five years, with every capable reader in the assembly given his turn. The elders preside as the assembly sings, reads, exhorts, and breaks bread. He quotes the *Bible Advocate*, a British paper, as saying: "The principle of mutual teaching is clearly a New Testament one; a constitutional law in the Church of Christ. The church is so constituted that unless the means for its edification are carried into practice its spiritual life will suffer . . . We contend that it is the right and privilege of all male members of the church, duly qualified, to share in the exhortation and teaching of the church."

Brother Straiton told the Abilene audience that this plan has worked well in the British churches. "It has developed into useful workers many members, and made congregations strong which would have been weak and sickly if they had had to depend on the ministration of a paid professional preacher," he said.

In the final analysis it is, of course, a matter of what the scriptures teach, and my study through the years has convinced me that this system is not only unscriptural (i. e., not authorized), but anti-scriptural (i. e., opposed to what is authorized) on several counts.

1. It supplants the work that God has given to the elders, who are the duly appointed pastors in the congregation. They are told by the Spirit to "nourish the flock" (Acts 20:28) and to be "apt teachers" (I Tim.. 3:2). They are further described as "able both to move his hearers with wholesome teaching and to confute objectors" (Titus 1:9).

2. It interferes with the principle of the priesthood of all believers in that it discourages the mutual sharing of all those in the congregation who are capable of such participation. Each believer is instructed to the effect that "Whatever gift each of you may have received, use it in service to one another, like good stewards dispensing the grace of God in its varied forms" (l Pet. 4:10). A hired functionary in the pulpit frustrates such instruction as the apostle outlines in 1 Cor. 14:26: "When you meet for worship, each of you contributes a hymn, some instruction, a revelation, an ecstatic utterance, or the interpretation of such an utterance. All of this must have one aim: to build up the church" (NEB). The *Jerusalem Bible* puts it: "At all your meetings, let everyone be ready with a psalm, etc." We all know that in most of our assemblies it would be of no avail for a brother *to be ready* to have something to say to the congregation, no matter how able he might be or how edifying his words. Talking in our assemblies has become a professional matter, and the pulpit, unknown of course to the early church, is reserved for a distinct class of men, designated by others as *the clergy.*

3. It creates and fosters a system that militates against the spirit of liberty that should characterize all that we do. “Christ set us free, to be free men,” Gal. 5:1 assures us, and any system that discourages open and free discussion, questioning, reading, thinking, and sharing — the means by which “the body grows until it has built itself up in love” — is anti-scriptural. We all know that the professional minister can never be really free, for he is employed to minister to the very ones to whom he looks for approbation and support. Not only must he watch what he says, but he must be careful about what he thinks, or reads, or the company he keeps. Recent history has confirmed our suspicion that the freer such a man allows himself to be the more likely it is that he will be fired.

But neither is the congregation free. Not only are they not permitted to share in building up the Body, but they are expected to conform to a system that defines the boundaries of much of their thought and behavior.

4. It obstructs true evangelism by supposing that the minister’s work is that of an evangelist. His work is really pastoral, which the elders and others should be doing. He should be sent out as. an itinerant, going from place to place, from house to house. preaching to those who have not heard or obeyed. It might be in the same city, to be sure, or even in the same neighborhood (and in doing such work he might be supported by the same church for a lifetime), but as an evangelist his work would be with unbelievers and with weak congregations that do not yet have proper leadership.

If the resident ministers are indeed evangelists, then we are keeping them from their proper function by means of this system. What would be the effect if our 30,000 or more preachers of the Restoration Movement were turned loose upon our communities in real evangelistic work? No longer bothered with office work, or pastoral calls, or sermonizing, they would go forth as fishers of men, like Jesus, and be busy bringing people to Jesus.

All these years I’ve been diligent to make myself clear as to what I mean by this system and what it is I object to, but only with limited success. I have been understood to be opposed to preaching the gospel, or to a preacher locating, or to his being paid, or to his working with a church having elders. Only recently an elder who is friendly toward my efforts expressed concern as to whether I would be happy in his congregation, referring to the presence of an employed preacher, who happens to be a good friend of mine. I explained to the elder that I had no objection to the preacher being on the payroll, but that he should be used as a servant to the community rather than ministering to the congregation all the time, much of which the elders themselves should be doing. I added that it is utterly ridiculous for one man to be doing all the teaching and exhorting in a congregation that is loaded with talent. The preacher would of course be part of the congregation, and he would, from time to time, speak to the assembly, as would numerous others, but he would not be “the minister,” an office unknown to the New Covenant scriptures.

A congregation might well have a professional staff of some dimension, depending on the opportunities that God has given it. It might support a psychiatrist in his ministry to disturbed souls or workers in the ghetto, among drug addicts, with the retarded, and with the youth, the aged and lonely. Deacons and deaconesses could be maintained among suffering humanity with its myriad of problems. One brother was supported as a dentist-evangelist in the back country of Mexico. All God's people are to be ministers, and it is but a reflection upon our devotion to the scriptures to speak of hiring anyone as "the minister." However varied our programs may be, however substantial our working staff may be, we can follow no plan that disturbs the great truth of the priesthood of all believers and mutual sharing in the assembly. A church with a vital mission, with all its members in some service, would find a one-man ministry only in the way. What would be more exciting than to gather in assembly and hear testimonials from different ones as to what God is doing in their lives?

Not only is the pastor system un-scriptural and anti-scriptural, it is also psychologically, pragmatically, economically, socially, and pedagogically ridiculous. A sales force such as Fuller Brush or Avon would soon fold if it depended upon any such lecture plan for its inspiration. Alcoholics Anonymous and other such missions of mercy would lose their power if they turned to some kind of sermonizing program. Any business organization that made no better use of its manpower than do our churches with this system would go into bankruptcy. If our schools used such a plan, the students would know no more about their studies than our members know about their Bibles.

Surely we have to agree with Alexander Campbell: "This everlasting sermonizing! What good is in it? It resembles nothing that is rational in all the compass of thought." *(Christian Baptist.* p. 77)

But there are signs of hope in this dismal picture. Preachers themselves are growing weary of a system that has stripped them of their freedom if not their manhood, that treats them more like clerks and caretakers than proclaimers of the Word. We are becoming a freer people in many places, and with that growing freedom comes a disenchantment for a system that treats a person like one more object in a stall. Our folk are daring to think, to read, to question, and to act as never before, all of which is a threat to a system that thrives on keeping people "like dumb driven cattle." We are becoming more curious about the world around us, better educated, and more concerned for those who suffer from injustice and inequality. The Spirit of God is moving among our people, filling us with his fruit and making us more like Jesus. We are increasingly more open to the fellowship of all God's people and the unity of his Body. No system that feeds upon ignorance, factionalism, littleness, and traditionalism can for long withstand such maturity.

One of our pioneers, burdened with this very problem, cried out in hope:

"Oh, that the people would read the scriptures and think and act for themselves, and then those who fear God would learn his statutes, walk in his commandments, enjoy an intelligent mind, a comfortable hope, and would grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Then they would shine as lights in the world, they would live as the salt of the earth, and many would be reclaimed from the error of their way." (Alexander Campbell, *Christian Baptist.* p. 31)

Let us believe that God is hastening that day in our own time! - *Presented at Hartford Forum (Illinois) Dec. 28.* 1973.

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FELLOWSHIP WITH ANGELS

By Richard Kirby

One reality that we neglect is that of the unseen spiritual world. On this subject I wish to suggest that we are influenced by the skeptical spirit of our age to a much greater degree than we imagine, and to urge upon my Christian brothers and sisters an awareness of spiritual beings, a reality which the spirit of materialism and pseudo-enlightenment has done so much to obscure.

A characteristic mark of our age—an age which has been called post scientific and even post-Christian—is its denial of everything supernatural. Spiritual beings described in the Bible are considered products of a benighted pre-scientific imagination, along with fairies, leprechauns, and unicorns. They are typically described as "medieval superstitions" such as no rational person can any longer believe. The Restoration Movement, infected as it was by the rationalism of Locke, thus drank deeply of the same fountain of "Enlightenment" that has come to full expression in this century. A deep mistrust of religious experiences, visions, and angelic visitations has always distinguished the movement. In this respect our fore-fathers did not come out "on the side of the angels." While we do not need a revival of that wonder-seeking subjectivism that the restoration preachers reacted against, we do need to realize that the rationalistic spirit was present at the inception of our movement and has penetrated its thought in a subtle way. This has resulted in our tendency to confine all supernatural activity to the past. While the attempt is made to support this view from the Bible, the real reason, I believe, is a reluctance to admit the supernatural in our time. This is the product of post scientific rationalism; it is basically anti-supernatural. While people may resist the full implications of anti-supernaturalism, they are nonetheless deeply dyed in it.

For instance, if we think about angels at all, we think of them as beings that *formerly* appeared to select individuals and who will be present at the Second Coming. We do not see them as now at work in our lives. We may grant that angels are still *somehow* "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. I**:14),** but we hardly grasp the implication of such teaching. We do little thinking about angels, and we are surprised by the suggestion that God has allotted to each of us a number of such beings to watch over us. It all sounds like idle speculation to us.

We have been conditioned to see the invisible world as a meaningless dance of atoms rather than as a purposeful dance of angels "in heavenly places." When we contemplate the universe, it is popular science, not the Bible, that most naturally furnished pictures for us. The "faith" of our minds may admit the existence of an invisible world such as the scriptures portray, but not the faith of our imagination. A person can "believe" that God will answer prayer or that He is ruling in the affairs of men, but if he expects no concrete results his faith is unworthy of the name. I may believe that everything cooperates with God for my good (Rom. 8:28); but if I am fearful and discontented my reason has not risen to the level of my faith.

Before an open Bible we will agree that angels and demons exist, but we are doubtful that they are active today as they were in New Testament times. This is more feeling than faith, for there is no sure evidence in the Bible that demon activity and angelic ministration were to cease. Not only do the scriptures indicate their continued activity, but every period of history furnishes records of demonization. Missionaries of all denominations report active demon resistance among their converts. So it is not the absence of evidence that disposes many of us to deny demon activity today. It is a mental attitude, born and bred in the climate of scientific materialism and nourished by rationalism.

It remains to be seen how much this rationalistic spirit has affected our outlook on spiritual things in general. What, for example, of the "prayer of faith" in healing, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, prevailing prayer? Is our attitude toward these subjects formed by reverence for what the Bible says or by the unconscious absorption of the twentieth century worldview?

One of the most subtle enemies of the mind is the inability to see beyond the assumptions of a particular time and place. The "Spirit of the Age" is the very atmosphere of our thought; in it we live and move and have our intellectual being. Only a sense of history can free us of its tyranny. Chesterton once said that the Catholic Church frees us from the necessity of being a child of our times. Substitute for Catholic Church God's revealed Word, and you have stated the Christian's unique position in any age. The Bible sets forth the true worldview. The believer is thus freed from the peculiar blindness of his age. The Bible describes reality. Scientific rationalism is a useful, if limited, approach to certain aspects of reality. The Christian who tries to impose the so-called scientific view on

the Bible loses his unique advantage and is unfaithful to his heritage. We must not be apologetic about the supernatural or wish to keep it safely confined to the first century. We must be unashamedly supernaturalistic. We must defy the Spirit of the Age and assert the reality of the other world without blushing. As the saints of both Testaments knew, this universe of ours is uncompromisingly miraculous. It is much more like a Magic Show which the Great Magician keeps in His spell than the blind, meaningless whirl of matter contemplated by the modern infidel.

This is not a call to return to medieval superstition or to a foolish credulousness, but I would prefer these to any view that excludes the miraculous from the world picture. As Francis Bacon once wrote: "I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran [Koran], than that this universal frame is without mind." Better be a medieval peasant than a latter day Christian Sadducee. The peasant nightly invoked his Lord against "the ghosties and ghoulies and long-legged beesties and things that go bump in the night," but the world of his imagination was closer to reality than the lifeless modern world picture.

I believe it is the Christian's duty to renounce this attitude, to reject the modern worldview, and to affirm the Bible world view unashamedly. Faced with militant anti-supernaturalism on the one hand and the rapid increase of demonic activity on the other, we must not be made timid by the climate of opinion, even among our brethren. Let us recognize our enemy with all his resources and take advantage of every spiritual weapon at our disposal.—*Montverde Academy, Montverde, Florida 32756*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

Over the holidays a full-page message appeared in a Dallas metropolitan newspaper entitled *Peace Be With You.* It began by saying: "At this most beautiful time of year, people talk of peace on earth and good will toward men. But the headlines of newspapers throughout the world blare forth another message. The world is filled with violence, crime, political crises, uncertainties and sufferings caused by the horrible deeds of men." It goes on to say: "In a world founded on Godliness and in an environment wherein Christianity abounds, violence will have no place, crime no criminal, a soldier no war."

The message appeared in behalf of five different churches or denominations, one investment company, and the affluent H. L. Hunt. The churches? Episcopal Diocese of Dallas, First Baptist Church, Presbyterian Church of the U. S., the Assemblies of God, and —believe it or not—the Skillman Ave. Church of Christ!

We commend this beautiful illustration of fellowship without endorsement!

Two non-class and/or one-cup congregations have recently undergone interesting changes. One in Montgomery, Alabama, ministered to by Dallas Burdette, has introduced the cups method of distributing the Supper after many years of using one cup. But this church has for several years been non-sectarian in that "the cups question" was no longer made a test of fellowship. The *Old Paths Advocate,* the journal of this persuasion, has harshly criticized this congregation, charging that it divided the Body in introducing the cups. The truth is, however, that the leaders waited until no one objected to cups before making the move and the congregation did not divide. There is presently a struggle going on among these brethren in behalf of more independence of thought and freedom from preachers and papers who, according to one report, presume to be "infallible interpreters of the Bible."

A non-class congregation in Dallas, the Skyline Church of Christ (and of course non-instrument too) recently have had two special three-day programs in which instruments were used. They also have five members who "have been baptized in the Holy Spirit." Their pulpit is open to others than those of their own persuasion and last year they had a unity meeting with a variety of participants, including a Church of God minister. The church supports two preachers, Tom Lehmann and Billy Jack Ivey.

Reuel Lemmons and Carl Ketcherside, editors of papers with substantially different approaches to current problems, were on the same program together with Christian Church-Church of Christ missionaries in Sao Paulo, Brazil. They flew down together, roomed together, ate together, and taught together. Reuel told me in Abilene that he first heard Carl when Carl was but a boy still in knee pants and that he had always liked him, even though he disagrees with him, and he said they had a good time together in Brazil. Carl told me in Hartford, Illinois that he loved Reuel and was looking forward to being with him. According to Reuel, during one session he handed a flit gun to Carl (one being use to combat troublesome insects) and told him that he could now spray him since Reuel had been spraying him. To which Carl replied: "After having to shoot at you from a long distance I'm glad now to be able to do it at such close range!" Reuel also said that he felt that the cooperative spirit shown among the missionaries in Brazil could be practiced among Christian Church and Church of Christ preachers in this country without any compromise of conviction.

Also from Abilene is the news that the *Restoration Quarterly,* a scholarly journal published from Church of Christ ranks, is planning to invite several Christian Church brothers to join their editorial board.

A new congregation has been formed in Abilene, presumably in opposition to recent events at Highland Church of Christ, which conducts Herald of Truth. The new church already has its own building, having obtained one from another religious group, and is in full swing with over 300 present for the first service. It will likely have the image of being a *conservative* reaction against the "liberalism" in Abilene, but to be distinguished from the non-Herald of Truth or "anti" congregation that has already been there for years. But one leader at Highland informs me that the new congregation has drawn widely from the city and that only a few families from Highland are involved. Moreover the Highland church is going strong numerically and spiritually: more baptisms last year than in recent years, greater attendance, and a beautiful spirit of love and oneness. And Herald of Truth is going to be all right.

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READERS' EXCHANGE

Your depiction of the Church of Christ: Yesterday and Today has been a delightful journey through time and distance, and I've appreciated your taking us along. Some stops along the way have shown pettiness and trial, but I believe that on the whole, because of yesterday and today, the Church of Christ of tomorrow will be even better.—*Larry Jackson, Box 428, Round Rock, Tx. 78664.*

Sharing your last two issues with my class motivated them to go for your group rate. Enclosed you will find my check and a list of subs.—*Bill Logue, Rt.* 2, *Gallatin, Tn. 37066*

(Ouida suggested that we include this from Bill as a suggestion to many others of you who might easily work up a club of subscribers. Only 1.00 per name per year in clubs of five or more. We are growing, but we'll grow more if more concerned ones will pass the word along.—*Ed.)*

I would very much appreciate it if you could forward to me each month by surface mail any Christian magazines you have finished reading. We have very little good literature here and we cannot send money to the U.S.A. for subscription purposes. Anything you send will be read and passed around I can assure you. The majority of the blacks here are Moslems or Catholics. Of the whites 6% are Dutch Reformed, 20%

Episcopal, 10% Methodist, and less than 1 % belong to the Church of Christ.—*Purves N. Roux, 203 Main Rd., Maitland* C. *P., South Africa*

(You might want to send an occasional package of literature to this faraway brother who would appreciate them so much.—*Ed.*)

I have completed a study of *Galatians,* which is a book on good news of liberty. I once thought that "the truth of the good news" referred to the totality of brotherhood interpretation, but now I see that it is the truth that Jesus has set us free from law, codes, rules—free to be His, free to serve Him. Now I know that my freedom in Jesus doesn't depend upon anything except my own personal liberty to study for myself, hold my own convictions and speak those convictions as I see that it edifies the body of Jesus. —*Name withheld*

I especially enjoyed your "Enough is Enough!"- I was turned off when one paper made a big splash on its front page about a Methodist preacher who "saw the light" and turned "Church of Christ" down in Alabama. I was glad the Methodist preacher was immersed, but I certainly can't see any point in splashing this on the front page. Would they do the same if a Church of Christ clergyman joined the Methodists?—*Talmadge McNabb, 107 Country Club Rd., Willingboro, NJ 08046*

Your article "Enough is Enough!" was almost enough for me. I thank God every day for the Marvin Bryants. His preaching of unity is certainly not bearing the fruit of division of the Leroy Garretts. —*Jerry Hunt, 1824 Tamworth Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210* .

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BOOK NOTES

How about a book by an Air Force sergeant who has little education and has served the church only as a member and a Sunday School teacher? *Jesus Christ is Alive and Well and Living in His Church* is one of those "down home" kind of testimonials that we need to read. He has illustrations that come alive: "Driving a standard-transmission car illustrates this. You let out on the clutch and in on the accelerator as one simultaneous effort. The 'old man' out and Christ in. Now what? Do I shift again?" 1.25.

Believing that idolatry is a product of "the imagination of men's hearts" and is therefore always with us, Kenneth Hamilton has prepared *To Turn from Idols,* which we can send to you for only 3.95, paper, 232 pages. One prominent idol these days is that of Change, which tempts us to believe that relevance is to be sought in place of truth, says the

author. This book may cause you to ask. yourself if we all do not, by nature, have idolatrous imaginations.

Let's Glorify God by Eric Fife is the result of a lifetime of study and experience of world missions, and it sets forth biblical principles for world evangelism. 1.25.

A Th.D. from Southern Baptist Seminary has written *Understanding Speaking in Tongues*, an informative volume that both traces this experience through history and provides an answer for those on both sides of the question. He explains how the *form* of glossolalia may be questioned, but contends that even so it may well be an authentic ministry of the Spirit. He has well named his 88-page treatment, for he is urging upon us the patience that comes only through *understanding*. 1.95.

We can now provide in inexpensive but beautiful paperback *The New Testament in Four Versions.* It has side by side, the King James, Revised Standard, Phillips, and the New English. This is four books in one and extends for 831 pages and is only 4.95.

We still have copies of *Demons in the World Today* by Unger, which is a needed volume for these days of hysteria on the subject. Only 1.95. We like to commend the little volume by John R. W. Stott on *The Baptism Fulness of the Holy Spirit* since it sets forth our own views. 95 cents. This might be balanced with George Otis' *God the Holy Spirit*, which traces His footprints all through scripture. 1.00.

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